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ABSTRACT

The teaching of literature and reading is explored in the four articles in this issue. Titles and authors of these articles are as follows: "Utopia and the Social Relevance of Reading Literature" by Patrick Brantlinger; "Free Reading in the High School English Class" by R. Baird Shuman; "Word Finds as a Reading 'Find'" by Barbara S. Ballirano; and "Three New Books on Children's Literature: A Review Essay" by Frederic E. Rusch. Two poems by Saul Rosenthal, a brief commentary on guiding students' focus when they study literature, and a letter to the editor about the author Jesse Stuart conclude the journal. (JM)

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PATRICK BRANTLINGER

Utopia and the Social Relevance of Reading Literature

I want to describe the freshman literature and composition course which I teach at Indiana University, based on the theme of utopianism, and to outline briefly the theoretical rationale which underlies it. I hope that this will be useful to you in two ways. First, I hope it will serve as a fairly typical example of one segment of the freshman English program at IU. From 1972 to 1974 I served as director of the program, and my course is based partly on that experience and partly also on the techniques and ideas of the other faculty members and graduate students who teach with me. And second, I hope that the ideas which underlie my freshman course will appeal to you, and that you'll discover some new directions for your own teaching among them.

The first freshman literature course which I taught at IU in 1968 was the second half of a two-semester great books course, in which we began with *Hamlet* and wound up with "J. Alfred Prufrock," who tells us that he is not Hamlet nor was meant to be. The declension from Hamlet to Prufrock suggests how that course went—mostly downhill—and also how I felt at the end of the semester—mostly Prufrockian. One reason why my first attempt at teaching literature to freshmen was unsatisfactory was personal: I was fresh out of graduate school, I had a smattering of poorly canned knowledge about Hamlet and Prufrock that I wanted to show off, and most of the time I lectured over the heads of my students. But another, equally important reason why that course was unsatisfactory was that its great books format rendered the literature irrelevant to the students by setting it above their everyday concerns. I treated the books on the reading list as T. S. Eliot and the New Critics and graduate school had taught me to treat them, as parts of an autonomous literary tradition with its own history and its own intrinsic literary properties, rather than as parts of the lives and history of ordinary men and women. On one side of the Great Wall of Culture were the classics, and only I had the keys to them, or thought that I had the keys. And on the other side of the Wall were Sally and Jack and Mike from Evansville and Fort Wayne, whose unclassical heads I was hoping to stuff with the classics. They, too, thought that I had all the keys to the books on the reading list, but they weren't as impressed by that illusion as I was. Anyway, I can safely say that I made *Hamlet* and "Prufrock" as irrelevant to most of my students as they had always been.

I use the word "irrelevant" deliberately. By 1968 the New Left had turned the word "relevance" into a battle cry. Why read Shakespeare when there was Eldredge Cleaver to read? And why read Cleaver or anybody else in a time when it seemed more important to act—to march, to sit in, to protest racism and the war in Vietnam? That is a fair rendering of the extreme New Left position, the position of Louis Kampf, for

example, who about 1968 was trying to radicalize the MLA. At the other extreme, and even more wrong-headed, it seems to me, are those New Critical and scholarly conservatives who insist that literature has nothing to do with politics, and who, in response to demands for relevance, play ostrich or clam, or who at best trundle out Cardinal Newman's *Idea of a University* in order to cite his argument about knowledge for its own sake as the aim of liberal education. In 1968 I sympathized with New Left radicalism in politics, but I taught like a fuzzed-over version of Cardinal Newman.

Although I do not agree with the extreme New Left position that only overtly political literature is relevant, by 1968 it was beginning to dawn on me that most of the teaching of literature which I had witnessed, including my own, sapped the vitality from literature by paying more attention to such purely literary matters as style, form, symbolism, and so forth, than to what the literature itself is about. The main thrust of the New Criticism of I. A. Richards, John Crowe Ransom, Cleanth Brooks, William Wimsatt, Allen Tate, Rene Wellek, and all the others has been to analyze literary works as much as possible in terms of their formal literary properties, and that had been the main thrust of my graduate education as well. The tendency of all of these highly influential critics is to depoliticize literature by treating it as something other that what it is—a social institution. True, in college courses we often treat literature historically by talking about the Romantic age or the Augustan age, and sometimes we allude to the social and political functions of literature. But usually all we manage to do is to point to similarities between Keats and Shelley, or between Pope and Swift. We hardly begin to ask why these writers wrote as they did in response to their social circumstances. I can remember hearing Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind" taught as a lovely poem about natural mutability, with no allusion to what Shelley meant by his seasonal symbolism. Well, "Ode to the West Wind" is a revolutionary manifesto in verse, and to fail to deal with its political meaning is to falsify it. At any rate, in my own first freshman literature course, I had falsified a great deal of literature in a similar manner. I had treated Shakespeare and T.S. Eliot as isolated geniuses rising free from history, as if their works had some kind of ethereal life independent of social context. We are always pretending that the great books which we teach are independent of history and politics—universal and timeless somehow—when in fact they are not only about history and politics, but they are also shaped by history and politics.

Having come to this realization, I had the problem of how to translate it into my teaching of literature. Clearly it wouldn't do to cram a lot of technical historical information into a freshman literature course. But about this time, I found much good advice in *The Uses of English*, Professor Herbert J. Muller's account of the 1966 Anglo-American Conference at Dartmouth. For one thing, unlike the New Critics, Muller is primarily a historian, so he understands that the study of English in our society has a broadly political function. That function Muller defines as the maintenance of freedom through the teaching of literacy, of a critical awareness of values, and of sensitivity to basic human problems. Because of the importance of the political function of English studies, Muller rejects the New Critical and scholarly overemphasis on the purely formal

and the intrinsically literary—what I would call the professionalization and trivialization of literature. Rather than in technical esthetic qualities, says Muller.

> Students are normally interested in basic themes, familiar ideas in a literary work, its connections with other works and broadly with life. Especially at a time when the study of literature is considered impractical and superfluous, it would seem poor strategy to play up its unique aesthetic qualities at the expense of its relevance to basic problems and common interests. . . .It should be no sin to talk about what literature is about. (*The Uses of English*, pp. 85-6).

Now I'm sure that every English teacher talks about what literature is about. But until recently we have received precious little aid and comfort from our major American critics or from most professors teaching graduate English courses. No doubt they are right to insist that talking about civil disobedience is not the same thing as talking about *Walden* but it is also clear that what Thoreau expected us to talk about is not patterns of insect imagery.

Besides getting some new ideas for my teaching from Muller's *The Uses of English*, by 1968 I had begun to read some other social and literary philosophers who also treat literature as a social institution, and who define all art as fundamentally utopian. In his book *The Rebel*, for example, Albert Camus defines art as a form of rebellion, a focusing of critical awareness that always contrasts the ideal with the real, what ought to be with what exists. Similarly, in a volume of essays called *Anarchy and Order*, Herbert Read says:

> Art . . .is eternally disturbing, permanently revolutionary. It is so because the artist, in the degree of his greatness, always confronts the unknown, and what he brings back from that confrontation is a novelty, a new symbol, a new vision of life, the outer image of inward things. His importance to society is not that he voices received opinions, or gives clear expression to the confused feelings of the masses: that is the function of the politician, the journalist, the demagogue. The artist is what the Germans call *ein Ruttler*, an upsetter of the established order. (p. xix).

And in *One-Dimensional Man* and elsewhere, Herbert Marcuse argues that art is always a presentation of the absent, or a form of "cognition which subverts" that which exists. For Marcuse, great art always creates a realm of freedom in which we can identify ourselves as standing in opposition to human limits and social injustice. In the chapter on "Phantasy and Utopia" in his book *Eros and Civilization*, Marcuse says: "Since the awakening of the consciousness of freedom, there is no genuine work of art that does not reveal the archetypal content: the negation of unfreedom." (p. 131).

The assertion that all art is utopian means that it is socially relevant at the same time that it is fantastic, for the idea of utopia combines these apparently contradictory qualities. Art is the rebellion of fantasy and the imagination against the limits imposed upon us by nature and by society. No matter what values may be consciously expressed in it, art is always a daydream of freedom. In Read, Camus, and Marcuse, I found a bridge between politics and the literary imagination, and an answer at least to my own questions about the relevance of reading Shakespeare and Eliot.

Too often in the past I had resorted to fuzzy apologetics about teaching imaginary artworks in a world of hard facts and urgent issues. Reading Camus and Marcuse led me to understand that literature is relevant precisely because it is imaginary. Instead of apologizing for the hostility of art to the real world, we need to find more ways to emphasize its ideal critical and utopian nature.

One means of doing this is to examine all of the ways in which we carry on fantasy activities like those embodied in novels and poems. I begin the freshman course which I now teach with a lecture in which I define literature as fundamentally utopian, and in which I relate it to other expressions of the imagination: to the other arts, to daydreams and nightmares, to religious myths and legends, to history, to cosmology, to fortune telling, to scientific prediction, and to all forms of planning for the future. All of these activities are types of story-telling, expressions of the imagination. Each one of us, in fact, is constantly engaged in storytelling, in daydreaming, and in planning what we want to do in the next five minutes or in the next week or in the rest of our lives and careers. So pervasive is storytelling in our lives that it continues even when we are asleep: even at night our minds spin dreams. And the same is true if we look at the broad outlines of history as well as at the minds of individuals. Throughout history, there has never been a society which has not created a body of myths and legends, or else of literary works and songs and paintings and sculptures: think of cave paintings or of Aztec carvings. So universal is the fantasy activity of art that it is clearly part of the human condition, something which defines human nature itself, like tool-making or the use of language. Moreover, all the myths and dreams and artworks which people produce are utopian, are expressions of imaginary fantasy activity which is opposed in some elemental sense to the real world. To put it another way, each separate fantasy which we produce expresses a wish fulfillment, and is an attempt to do in imagination what may be impossible to do in actuality. In *The Interpretation of Dreams* and elsewhere, Freud consistently likens artworks to dreams, and analyzes both in terms of wish fulfillment. In his early essay on "The Relation of the Poet to Day-Dreaming," Freud likens all works of literature to daydreams, which he sees as expressions of unhappiness, or as attempts through imagination to overcome the inadequacies of the real world. "We can begin by saying that happy people never make phantasies," says Freud, "only unsatisfied ones. Unsatisfied wishes are the driving power behind phantasies; every separate phantasy contains the fulfillment of a wish, and improves on unsatisfactory reality." Of course Freud also implies that there are no happy people among us, or at least that we are not happy much of the time, because daydreaming in one form or another is a universal activity, and gets into everything we do. So universal is fantasy-making, in fact, that it is possible to say that history itself is propelled by the utopian images which societies create. Literature is the collective daydreaming of all of us. In the introduction to his anthology of *Utopian Literature*, J. W. Johnson talks about the migrations of various primitive peoples, led on by their visions of better lives and greener pastures:

> They must have been driven by despair and hope: despair for their lost way of life and hope of a new, better life someplace where food was plentiful and the ills and terrors of the nomadic life could be ended. In their search for the Happy Hunting Ground, some waves of Mongolians ventured across the Bering Straits and made their way down into two strange new continents. Some Caucasian peoples headed south toward the warm waters of the Mediterranean, where hopeful rumors claimed the trees bore fruit of shining gold and sheep had golden fleece.

And Johnson continues with the utopian visions of the Israelites: the Garden of Eden, the Land Flowing with Milk and Honey, the New Jerusalem. In the words of the German philosopher Ernst Bloch, history is moved by "the principle of hope."

Having established that both our individual psyches and our collective history are propelled by utopian visions, I try to steer my freshmen in two directions. First, I try to get them to recognize the similarities between their own fantasies and the fantasies of the great writers on the reading list. Instead of assigning critical essays and research papers which imply a sharp separation between the lowly students and the creative geniuses of the world, I invite my freshmen to communicate their own fantasies in various ways: to write about their future careers, to design their own utopias and dystopias, to spin out their daydreams or their nightmares into written form. Even the research paper assignment in the course is based on the idea of breaking down the artifical barriers between literature and other activities: the list of suggested topics, including everything from music to city planning, implies that utopian fantasizing pervades all fields of human endeavor. And the second direction in which I try to steer my students is towards an understanding of the broad social and historical functions of literature. The works on the reading list are grouped chronologically, from Plato and the Bible down to Anthony Burgess and Kurt Vonnegut, under topic headings which are indicators of how different societies and ages have created and followed different utopian visions: the excitement of the discovery of "new worlds" in the Renaissance which More, Rabelais, and Shakespeare express in their island utopias; the excitement of the opening up of the American frontier which Thoreau in *Walden* and Hollywood in endless westerns express; and the impact of technological change which is reflected in modern dystopian fictions like *A Clockwork Orange* and in modern science fiction like Arthur C. Clarke's *Childhood's End*.

To emphasize the idea of literature as social fantasizing and wish fulfillment, I begin with two simple utopian poems, "The Land of Cockagne" from the late Middle Ages and "The Big Rock Candy Mountains" from the depression era in this century. Because both are anonymous folk poems, they demonstrate the collective or group nature of all literature. "The Land of Cockagne" is the wish-fulfillment fantasy of all the medieval monks and scholars who made it and recited it and "The Big Rock Candy Mountains" is the creation of tramps and hoboes during and after the depression. Moreover, both express simple utopian daydreams about the elimination of scarcity and conflict from life—what Marcuse would call the "archetypal content" of all literature. "The Land of Cockagne" is a land where everything is "merry and bright," better

than Eden, where good things to eat fall well-cooked into the mouths of the hungry, and where the rigors of monastery and university life have been replaced by fun and games, including free love with the beautiful nuns who are omnipresent. And "The Big Rock Candy Mountains" is also a place of freedom and abundance, where the handouts grow on bushes, the streams flow with whisky and lemonade, and

> All the cops have wooden legs,
> The bulldogs all have rubber teeth,
> And the hens lay soft-boiled eggs.

These poems serve as simple illustrations of the utopian nature of all literary fantasy, and so do the more serious reading assignments with which we begin—parts of Plato's *Republic* and of the Bible (the Garden of Eden, some of Isaiah, the Sermon on the Mount, and portions of Revelation).

Of course I can't pretend that there are no problems with the way I now teach freshman literature. But I do know that the course which I now teach is more effective than the one I started out with in 1968. The evaluation forms which I have my freshmen fill out tell me so, and so do the graduate student Associate Instructors who work with me. There has been a measurable increase in the quality of writing which the freshmen produce, and also in the quality of their reading comprehension, as manifested in their responses to exam questions. While that does not mean that the freshmen learn to read and write in my course, it does mean that they *do* read and write in it with more proficiency and interest than they did in the 1968 course. For most of them, in other words, my present approach does seem to work better in leading them to exercise and improve the reading and writing skills which they bring with them to college. And each semester there have been a few students who have told me that they never had to read a book before, or that they never had to write about themselves before, or even that they never had to write a paper before. For a few such students, freshman literature is a real awakening; but the same students in my 1968 course would have failed or dropped out or—as far as I was then concerned with the fate of my "poorer" students— just disappeared. In any case, I am now heartened by the results of my present freshman literature course which, insofar as I can measure them, are better on every count than the results of the great books course which I taught in 1968.

I believe that the main reason why my present course is more effective is that I now try to make all of the connections between literature and other subjects which the New Criticism and my own graduate education disallowed. "Literature as literature," to use the sterile phrase of Rene Wellek and Austin Warren in *The Theory of Literature*, is not what I teach. Instead, I try to teach what literature is about. And literature is about life. Contrary to Wellek and Warren, literature cannot be separated from history, from the other arts, from religion, from issues of social justice, and from the lives and visions of ordinary men and women. The problem for us as teachers is not that literature is irrelevant, but that it is relevant to everything. Or if that strikes you as an exaggeration, at least you may agree with Marianne Moore, who tells us that in poetry there are always "real toads in imaginary gardens."

R. BAIRD SHUMAN

Free Reading in the High School English Class

English teachers view the typical English classroom as a sterile and unlovely place in which to expect students to engage in extensive pleasure reading. After all, most of *us* who like to read tend to do it when we are comfortable, propped up in bed, draped akimbo over our favorite chair, or lying flat on the living room floor. To us it may seem that our students should be encouraged to do the bulk of their reading outside the classroom partially because this frees up precious class time for other important pursuits, but even more importantly because we want reading to be a comfortable, happy, and informal experience for our students. We want them, after all, to develop a lifetime habit of reading, and who is going to do the bulk of his pleasure reading in a classroom?

However, we often forget that many of our students come from backgrounds and environments in which books play almost no part at all. It is especially true that for our poor readers who "are not usually in the habit of reading at home, providing time for some *authentic*, relaxed reading [in the English classroom] is probably one of the best things we can do."[1] It is clear that "in any reading class, remedial or otherwise, people must spend the major portion of their time reading!"

Free reading in English classrooms has long been a common practice. It has been noted[2] that a significant move toward free reading began in the 1920's. Lou LaBrant reported extensively on her wide-ranging experiments with free reading in *An Evaluation of the Free Reading in Grades Ten, Eleven, and Twelve* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1936). From that time to this, free reading of one sort or another has been almost universally practiced in English classes. Few question the appropriateness of including such an activity in the English class on a regular basis, although there is considerable disagreement about how free reading should be handled.

In-Class Reading

Theodore Hipple suggests a free reading Friday, having himself reserved Friday as the day on which his "students could read, for pleasure or for other purposes, whatever books they wanted to read; for slower classes, magazines, except for the erotic kind, were acceptable."[3] Hipple required no reports on the readings except that the student was to list the books he had read, placing an "X" beside each and placing an "XX" beside any that he thought other students in the class might enjoy. Using this one-day-a-week approach, Hipple reports that in a typical class of average ability, each student read an average of fourteen books in a school year.

Rosanne Dattilo emphasizes the need for the teacher to create "an atmosphere in the classroom that is conducive to the activity of reading," suggesting that comfortable furniture be brought into the classroom and that a portion of the room be set aside specifically as a reading area. She continues, "Along with the place, you'll need a time for reading. At least one or two days a week should be set aside for in-class reading."[4]

Ann W. Ackerman went far beyond this and, following Lou LaBrant's early lead, had her non-academic seniors spend six weeks doing nothing in class except read any books they wished. In the time allotted, 34 students read a total of 253 books. When asked if they thought that every student in grades 9 through 12 should have six weeks of this kind of reading each year, 33 of the 34 students participating answered in the affirmative.[5]

Some Cautions and Suggestions

Burton and his collaborators remind the teacher that to set aside one day a week for classroom reading "allows little reading continuity. If a student is excited by a book begun on Friday, he may, of course, continue his reading the next day—*if* he has free time during the weekend."[6] Perhaps the one-day-a-week approach to reading *will* work well with some students. However, with poor readers and/or slow learners—and it should be emphasized that the two are not necessarily the same—it is probably desirable to set aside some class time every day for reading in the English class. Poor readers will thereby benefit from the opportunity for continuity in reading. Many of them will also find a sense of security in the daily repetition of an organizational structure for the English class. Also, where attention spans are not great, it is always desirable to move from one activity to another, probably not focusing on any single activity for more than 15 minutes.

In some situations, it may be well to use a variation of the Hunt-McCracken *Sustained Silent Reading Program.* This program, designed originally for use with well-motivated college students who experienced difficulty in reading, is rigidly structured and has of late been used effectively with some poor readers in secondary schools. Hunt and McCracken rigidly enforced six rules: (1) each student must read silently; (2) the teacher reads; (3) each student selects a single book, magazine, or newspaper to read; (4) a timer is used so that students will not become clock watchers; (5) there are absolutely no reports or records of any kind; and (6) the work is carried on with large groups of students, heterogeneously grouped.

Hunt and McCracken did not have students read for inordinate periods of time—usually 10 to 15 minutes was found to be desirable. They would announce at the sounding of the buzzer, "Good. You have sustained your reading today for ———— minutes. Continue reading if you wish." They found that in large groups, students tended to talk less among themselves than they did in small groups, therefore they insisted upon item 6, above[7].

Those who would institute free reading in the English classroom should bear in mind some early research on the topic which indicates that unguided free reading experiences result in little modification in the

reading habits of students. Without guidance, the student may work within a very narrow range, never expanding his literary tastes and never seeking out literature which would broaden his horizons by permitting him to experience vicariously the enormous range of experience to which quality literature can expose one.[8] The mystery story addict may remain forever a mystery story addict, the reader of romances forever a reader of romances. If such is allowed to be the case, obviously the higher purposes of teaching reading will not be served.

Jack Schaefer, the author of *Shane*, stridently calls upon the teacher to do considerable reading aloud to students: "She [the teacher] knows how to read or she has no right to teach, regardless of degrees and certificates and other official nonsense. She should demonstrate that exotic unpopular ability she has somehow acquired. She is a fake, a swindler not earning even her relatively low salary, if she simply assigns outside reading for her students and then gabbles about them in class. She should do considerable of their reading for them. She should often read aloud to them."[9]

Burton and his collaborators clearly outline the functions that a teacher must serve in free reading situations, and they go far beyond what Handlan and Schaefer suggest. They contend, "The teacher must really believe that his students will improve in reading and will enjoy reading much more if they choose their own selections; he must be a reader who is willing to communicate his delight in reading to students by serving as a model; he must know many books at many levels of difficulty and taste." They go on to list many other qualities that the teacher must have if he is to be an effective teacher of reading, stressing that he must know his students' tastes and interests and "must work surreptitiously to recommend books which might lead to better and more difficult reading." Perhaps the most cogent recommendation that Burton and his colleagues make is that the teacher "must be able to bring specific students in contact with specific books for specific reasons, and judging how to do that tactfully is no small job."[10]

Loban, Ryan, and Squire indicate that "fixed lists of books from which individuals are asked to make their own selections have been criticized in recent years, but it is the rigidity with which such lists are used rather than the list itself which is to be avoided. Those intended primarily to suggest titles which can be supplemented by individual arrangements prove helpful and offer a convenient way of organizing reading guidance in large classes." The authors also suggest that teachers and students work together to assemble reading lists or that teachers draw up lists derived from suggestions made by students in previous classes.[11]

It is clearly apparent that many students will never read very much if they do not read in the classroom; therefore some consistent pattern of in-class reading activity must be a part of the regular English program. For those who read well, perhaps portions of one or two class periods a week will suffice. For reluctant or disabled readers, probably a regular daily reading period of 10 or 15 minutes is advisable. If students are severely disabled, the teacher will have to read to the class. This can be done quite effectively if the teacher reads a story into a cassette and encourages the students to read along as the cassette plays. Some teachers may wish to go

one step further, reading an exciting story into a cassette up to the most crucial stage, as Laura S. Johnson suggests, and then putting the student on his own to finish the story.[12] This technique often provides the student with a motivation beyond what he might normally have; however, some students who are severely disabled may not be able to finish, so the teacher should be prepared to finish the story for them if such is the case.

It is generally agreed that when silent classroom reading sessions take place, the teacher should read as the students are reading. Teachers should also employ such techniques as putting a sign on the classroom door reading, "DO NOT DISTURB—READ-IN IN SESSION," or words to that effect. The teacher must do everything in his power to make reading sessions important events for students. By doing this, they will help their students develop good reading habits and continuing reading enthusiasms.

FOOTNOTES

[1]Ronald Santora and Louise Jensen. "Reality Therapy in Reading: It's What's in People that Counts," *English Journal,* 63 (November 1974), p. 49.

[2]See Dwight L. Burton, Kenneth L. Donelson, Bryant Fillion, and Beverly Haley. *Teaching English Today* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1975), p. 183.

[3]Theodore Hipple. *Teaching English in Secondary Schools* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1973), p. 65.

[4]"Once You've Enjoyed a Good Kiss, You'll Want to Kiss Some More: Reading and Measurement in Secondary Schools," *English Journal,* 63 (November 1974), p. 55.

5"Reading for Pleasure and Profit," *English Journal,* 58 (October 1969), p. 1042.

[6]Burton, *et al.*, p. 184.

[7]For a fuller account of this program see Robert A. McCracken, "Initiating Sustained Silent Reading," *Journal of Reading,* 14 (1970-71), pp. 521-25, 582-83.

[8]Bertha Handlan. "The Fallacy of Free Reading as an Approach to Appreciating," *English Journal,* 35 (April 1946), pp. 182-88. See also her "Group Discussion of Individual Reading," *English Journal,* 23 (February 1943), pp. 67-74.

[9]"If Stories Must Be Taught," in Stephen Dunning and Alan B. Howes, eds., *Literature for Adolescents: Teaching Poems, Stories, Novels, and Plays* (Glenview, Ill.: Scott Foresman and Company, 1975), p. 125.

[10]Burton, *et al.*, pp. 183-84.

[11]Walter Loban, Margaret Ryan, and James R. Squire. *Teaching Language and Literature: Grades 7-12* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1961), p. 293.

[12]"Cool It, Teach! And Tape All of It!" *Journal of Reading,* 47 (December 1973), pp. 129-31.

BARBARA S. BALLIRANO

Word Finds as a Reading "Find"

Innocently say "reading" in a crowded faculty room, and the result will be similar to giving Tender Vittles to finicky, hungry cats: everyone reacts. Even the same hardened veteran, who never condescends to raising an eyebrow at the mention of the school's number one mischief-maker, shudders when he considers the reading abilities of many of his students. That is because wise teachers know that mischief-makers graduate eventually. Overcoming reading problems is a constant professional hazard.

The term "reading problems" conjures up a vast array of mental pictures: minimal sight vocabulary coupled with immature writing vocabulary; confusion in pronunciation and interpretation of similar-sounding words; stumbling and repetition in oral reading already devoid of timing, expression—and comprehension.

Perhaps a large part of the difficulties in lessening students' deficiencies rest with teachers outside the reading field. We tend to think of reading in terms of whole sentences, paragraphs, and stories. While comprehension of a whole piece of writing is basic to class discussion of assignments, we must remember that understanding of individual words is the primary building block and key to skillful reading. A thirteen-year old with a fourth-grade reading ability may read a selection written at the eighth-grade reading level and vividly recall even the most minute details of the story. How? He merely "cancelled out"—or ignored—those words beyond his understanding. We all know, however, that the student's comprehension has not been heightened by his feat. He has missed the "how" of the story signified by that one unknown word: the manner in which something was said; a suggestive expression on a character's face; a pun. Connotations are meaningless to the poor reader because he can grasp only literal interpretation. It is no wonder that teachers often find theirs the only sound of laughter in a room while reading the subtle, tongue-in-cheek humor of Mark Twain or James Thurber.

In elementary school, two skills—among others—supply the groundwork for reading readiness. Children learn letter combinations and associate them with sounds. Sight vocabularies are stressed. Later, in junior high school, these two aspects of reading may be neglected due to a myriad of reasons: inadequate programs, inadequate length of instruction, large numbers of students in one class precluding effective individualized instruction, and so on. Learning to spell and memorize vocabulary words may be a student's only direct experience for extending sight vocabulary and recognizing recurring letter combinations in word formation. For some students, this study, in addition to regular reading assignments in all courses, is ample instruction. For students reading

below grade level, the deluge of a greater reading load, consisting of increasingly difficult vocabulary words which must be memorized rather than ignored, is overwhelming and thwarts any desire to read.

One effective tool which reinforces students' sight vocabulary and perception of letter combinations is a word find. Several factors make it an excellent teaching tool. All students, from the worst readers to the best, treat it as an entertaining, challenging game. It is simple to construct and lends itself to any aspect of English study or any other subject area. Students are not frustrated by not knowing specific words, as they may be in doing crossword puzzles, because the words to be found are listed. Not only does completing the word find reinforce sight vocabulary, the student expands his vocabulary by having to find words that are new to him. A student may be assigned to solve a word puzzle and to write definitions of some or all of the terms in the game. By looking for letter combinations to find hidden words, the student reinforces concepts of correct spelling. Furthermore, rediscovering the *a* in *literature* may also awake a student's awareness of his pronunciation of the word.

While every instructor can best determine the difficulty of word finds suited to his students' abilities, an easy-to-difficult approach is always best. The first few word finds may consist of only twenty words reading vertically (both ways) and horizontally (foward and backward). Later, as the number of terms increases, words reading diagonally (both ways) should be added.

To make a word find, make a grid and ditto copies of it for future puzzle construction. Begin filling in the rough draft with longer words first, followed by the shortest ones last. Try to avoid forming words which have nothing to do with the topic of the puzzle. Finding unrelated terms is distracting and leads students to wonder whether the teacher is dumb or just trying to be tricky by having omissions in the list of terms to be found.

Large numbers of bisecting words and words veering out in all directions from one particular letter may constitute difficulty for some students, but should be used to maintain challenge. As students' adeptness grows, it may be fun to tell them how many words are hidden and let them list their findings themselves. On an antonym word find, the word *cowardly* may be listed, but the word *courageous* is to be found in the puzzle.

Words of a variety of letter lengths should be used in the game. Later, even phrases of two or three words may be included. Ironically, it is easier to make errors in the construction by inadvertantly writing words of two or three letters more than one time. This mistake arises when one is attempting to be tricky by writing the same sequence of letters to fool a student (*pun* and *punt*, for example). Type the rough copy of the game using all capital letters for easier letter identification. Some students are still confusing *b* and *d*, *s* and *z* even in junior high school. Double spacing between letters and rows lends a neater appearance to the puzzle and reduces confusion of lines as the students continue to circle answers.

Students will reach the point where they are ready to construct their own word finds for the class. They may do it individually, or as a group project growing out of some aspect of study. If students are working on a synonym unit, each group may do a word find consisting of synonyms for

an emotion. Names of authors, literature terms, verb plurals, subordinators, terms relating to holidays—anything within the imagination can be used.

As with any successful teaching tool, word finds should be used at wide intervals of time as a game or learning exercise only. They should not be used as test or timed quizzes. Students will take no interest in an activity they know they cannot complete, so give ample time for every person to complete the game. To aid students, tell them to look for words by seeking those placed horizontally first, then those written vertically, and lastly those that are written diagonally. As each student finishes the puzzle, he may check his own paper. Correction is best done with an overhead projector and four transparencies. Place vertical, horizontal, then diagonal answers over the puzzle one at a time. Using different colors of ink on each transparency eases the correction. If possible, it is best to have everyone correct the word finds together in a class discussion. In this way, a teacher learns which words were difficult to find, and the definitions of any term can be discussed.

While it is not a panacea, a word find will help a student develop understanding of the single word. After all, it is that one word which tells how something was done; that single word unlocks the humor in a pun; the single word evokes the connotation. What better place is there to start?

SAMPLE WORD FIND: SYNONYMS

Synonyms are words which have the same meaning or nearly the same meaning. In the word find below are verbs which may be used in place of the word *walk*. Look for these synonyms which read in every direction—vertically, horizontally and diagonally. The only rule to follow in finding the words is that the letters of the word must follow each other in a straight line. Circle each term as you find it and check it off the list given below.

Y S S T R U T Z A A L R R O A M M A S

S L H O B B L E M L Y I Q U M K S R T

E T T U Q F L J B M U Z M I L A R O R

R S O I E H N K L A T S X P S T I A O

E W P M P L C L E O R Y O H W B M Z L

K A V I P T F E F L O V A A C B W A L

O G O R A L O F R I V Y L I L A J Z Q

E G E L X R X E U Q E T R E G G A T S

L E Z G L N T E M H Z A L G L L U M E

C R T X P N Y D O P S I O S T E P N C

R C A S U L O I J M A R C H R E U T N

E O A A E K U R E D N A W Z K Q C I A

E K S V J A O T S I R I D I T Z V A R

P E D I L G D S Z Y W Y H T R A M P P

amble
creep
glide
hike
hobble
limp
march
pace
prance
ramble
roam
rove
sashay
saunter
shuffle
stagger
stalk
step
stomp
stride
stroll
strut
swagger
tiptoe
traipse
tramp
tread
walk
waltz
wander

FREDERIC E. RUSCH

Three New Books on Children's Literature: A Review Essay

Last year over 2500 books for children were published in the United States. When one considers that these books were added to the approximately 39,000 already in print plus the thousands no longer in print but still available on library shelves for children, one realizes rather quickly that one of the basic problems for persons studying, teaching or selecting children's literature is becoming familiar with the field. But familiarity is hardly enough. If reading is to be an enjoyable and meaningful experience for children, people who bring books to them must, in addition, be able to evaluate these books in order to separate the good from the mediocre and poor, be aware of the needs and interests of children as they develop, be capable of matching books with the reading skills of children, and be skilled at teaching literature in a manner that makes it interesting and valuable. Bringing books to children, in other words is no easy task, and, consequently, one is always on the lookout for new books that will increase one's competence in fulfilling it.

Recently, I received three new books that were published to assist in this task: *An Introduction to Children's Literature* by Mary J. Lickteig (Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill, 1975), *Creative Growth through Literature for Children and Adolescents* by Margaret C. Gillespie and John W. Conner (Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill, 1975), and *Literature for Thursday's Child* by Sam Leaton Sebesta and William J. Iverson (Chicago: Science Research Associates, 1975). In purpose and emphasis, the books complement one another quite well because each focuses on a different problem from among those I outlined above. Thus, at first glance, it would appear that all three are useful additions to the book shelves of persons working with children's literature. Unfortunately, however, a more thorough examination shows that only one of them is.

An Introduction to Children's Literature focuses on the problem of becoming familiar with the wide range of books in the field. In the preface, Lickteig states:

> *Introduction* is the key word. The book does not tell everything about the field, but introduces the reader to the various areas of children's literature, provides some background about the importance of each area, and includes some examples of works that have been written in each area.

In accordance with her purpose, Lickteig organizes her discussion around the major areas or categories of children's books: picture books, informational books, traditional literature, poetry, modern fantasy, and realistic fiction. In addition, she includes introductory chapters on the history of children's literature and book selection and closing chapters on

the classics, on bibliotherapy and on "planning . . . literary experiences in the classroom and libraries that will promote recreational eading."

Persons acquainted with children's literature will quickly note that Lickteig's focus, purpose, and organization are similar to those found in many other books about the field, particularly May Hill Arbuthnot's *Children and Books* and Charlotte S. Huck and Doris Young Kuhn's *Children's Literature in the Elementary School.* Now there is nothing wrong with writing a book that is similar to others on the market, but, when one does, he should offer the reader something more than the others: better writing, perhaps, or more information and new insights. Lickteig, however, offers less. Throughout her book, she relies heavily on comments by others, fails to support her generalizations and expresses herself in a manner that is dull and, occasionally, incorrect. Here, for example, are her comments on the differences between adult and children's books:

> When comparing children and adult books, Jean Karl says that "outlook" is one basic difference. The outlooks characteristic of children's books, according to Karl, include the ability to look at life with hope, a sense of wonder about the world, a sense of adventure, and a feeling that life is valuable. Because of their vocabulary and limited experiences, children's books differ from books written for adults. Children's literature has much for adults to enjoy, and some adult books can be read and enjoyed by children. Thus. there is no well-defined line between children's literature and adult literature. (p. 5)

Even if one overlooks the dangling modifier (children's books do not have experiences, children do), this is a poor piece of writing. How does the vocabulary of children's books differ from that of adult books? What kinds of experiences are omitted from children's books? And don't many adult books share the "outlooks" described by Karl?

The preceding passage came from the opening chapter in the book, but the quality of the writing does not improve when Lickteig turns her attention to introducing the various areas of children's literature. In these chapters, she often states the obvious, and she emphasizes subject matter rather than quality in her brief annotations. Also, some of her annotations of major works are incorrect. Note these characteristics in the following passage from the chapter on realistic fiction:

> Stories about the Revolutionary War emphasize an important period of American history. *Day of Glory* by Philip Spencer is a recount of the twenty-four hour period during which the battles of Lexington and Concord were fought. *Johnny Tremain,* the Newbery Award winner by Esther Forbes, tells the story of a young apprentice to Paul Revere whose hand became useless when it was burned by molten silver. He was a determined lad and later played an important part in the events of the war. (p. 268)

In conclusion, the problem with *An Introduction to Children's Literature* is that it offers persons in the field little that has not been said better and with more detail and insight in other introductions.

In contrast to Lickteig's book, *Creative Growth through Literature for Children and Adolescents* is different than other introductions in its focus and organization. Margaret C. Gillespie and John W. Conner focus on the relationship between the development of a child and the literature he reads. Following three general chapters on the nature of children's literature, the growth and development of a child and the value of literary encounters, the authors organize their discussion around five stages of growth: the pre-school years, the early school years, the middle school years, the early adolescent years, and the later adolescent years. In a lengthy chapter devoted to each stage, the authors first examine the intellectual, social, and physical development of the child and then survey the literature available to him under the categories of narrative prose, expository prose, poetry, and drama. By using this approach, Gillespie and Conner emphasize better than most authors of books on children's literature the interdependence of a child's needs and interests and his enjoyment of literature. However, the authors' major purpose in the book is to promote "creative growth" through literary encounters, and in fulfilling this purpose, they are less successful.

Because persons who wish to bring about literary encounters that will result in creative growth must be familiar with both child development and children's literature, the authors designed their book to serve as a guide to both areas. In achievement, however, it is a useful guide only in acquainting readers with the changes that occur in the various stages of a child's development. As a guide to children's literature, the book is weak for a number of reasons. First, the authors seem to have only a vague understanding of the various areas of children's literature and of the criteria one uses to distinguish the mediocre from the good book within each area. For instance, they classify poetry into two types, rhymed and unrhymed, and mistakenly suggest that free verse is synonymous with unrhymed. In their comments on traditional literature, they consistently refer to "fairy and folk tales," thereby implying that the two are in some way different. Furthermore, when they present examples of the various types, they often give equal treatment to good and mediocre works. In their examples of biographies for later adolescents, for instance, they discuss a biography of the professional basketball player Walt Frazier entitled *Clyde* in as much detail as they do Anne Frank's diary. Second, because of the mistakes in the authors' descriptions of well-known works, and, occasionally in their classification of them, one wonders if they have read and evaluated many of the works they list. To cite just a few examples, they list the major characters in Grahame's *The Wind in the Willows* as "Toad, Ratty, Mole and Beaver" (p. 57); they mention the Trojan Horse episode as one of the memorable incidents in *The Iliad* (p. 13); and they cite Harold Keith's *Rifles for Watie*, a novel recommended for early adolescents in other books on children's literature, as "an example of the substantial historical fiction available for the middle school reader." (p. 174)

In various sections in their books, Lickteig and Gillespie and Conner comment on the importance of teaching in making the reading of literature an enjoyable and meaningful experience for children. Yet both books provide only general suggestions on how literature should be taught. Sam Leaton Sebesta and William J. Iverson's *Literature for Thursday's Child*, on the other hand, focuses on this problem.

Sebasta and Iverson's book is divided into three parts. In the first, the authors examine the purposes of literature, reference sources that aid in selecting literary works, the elements of literature such as plot, theme, character, and point of view, the various theories of human development and their usefulness in matching children and books and, finally, children's reading levels and the readability of books. In the second they survey the various areas of children's books, and in the third they discuss various techniques teachers can use to make children's reading and study of literature meet the purposes for which it exists. From this outline, it would appear that this book is more superficial than both Lickteig's and Gillespie and Conner's. In fact, however, it is the most detailed and useful.

Throughout their background discussions in part one, the authors consistently illustrate their comments with specific and appropriate examples from children's books. Moreover, at various points in the chapters under the heading "special activities" they suggest projects that readers might engage in to reinforce or discover for themselves the concepts and principles the authors outline, and, at the end of the chapters, they provide annotated bibliographies of articles and books on the subjects discussed in the chapters. In the surveys in part two, they not only summarize the contents of numerous works in the areas, but frequently they point out the strengths and/or weaknesses in the works they cite. Here, for example, is one of two paragraphs they devote to Lois Lenski's books in their chapter on realistic fiction:

> The Lenski books contain the author's own illustrations and maps, the latter often in the form of picto-maps to aid the reader in following the story. In fact, nearly every attempt is made to clarify the reader's concept of each region. Less successful, however, is the attempt to create memorable characters. Despite the local color, Lenski heroes and heroines seem somewhat abstract. They react in stereotyped ways, and incidents that should be crucial to character development are glossed over. For instance, in *Coal Camp Girl* Tina is so depressed about the injury of her uncle that she leaves school; a couple of pages later this depression is dismissed and Tina worries instead about a colt with colic; shortly thereafter she is exploring an empty house, trying to solve its mystery. The pattern in all these books is one of quickly solved problems. The optimistic tone is preserved perhaps at the expense of heavier involvement and more deeply felt characterization. Nevertheless, on most grounds these are good books of the regional type, simply enough written for the lower intermediate level. (p. 274)

One need not agree with all of the authors' evaluations in part two to see their value; by treating the works they survey critically, the authors reinforce the concepts they have introduced in part one, particularly those introduced in the chapter on the elements of fiction.

While the discussions in parts one and two are much more detailed and, I might add, better written, than the corresponding discussions in the other two books, their primary function in *Literature for Thursday's Child* is to prepare a reader for the discussion of ways to teach children's literature in part three. This discussion is divided into three chapters:

"Guiding the Literary Experience," "Creative Techniques for Exploring Literature," and "Literature and the Creative Process." The first of these should be required reading for all teachers using literature in the classroom. In it Sebesta and Iverson demonstrate the criteria used to separate good from appropriate literature and then offer suggestions on techniques teachers can use to provide intensive literary experiences as opposed to merely guiding children to a familiarity with literature on the literal level. What makes this chapter particularly useful is that throughout it the authors illustrate the techniques by showing how they might be applied to Perrault's "Puss in Boots." The second of the chapters in this section deals with reading aloud, storytelling, creative dramatics, puppetry, and choral verse, and the third offers suggestions on ways teachers can introduce children to the creative process involved in writing literature.

Sebesta and Iverson's book is a truly worthwhile contribution to the field of children's literature. Although its primary audience is teachers, anyone in the field will find it stimulating and insightful. The work has a few weaknesses—I wish the authors had included a chapter on biography in part two, for instance—but these are far outdistanced by its strengths. Indeed, its only major weakness is its title, which, because it fails to give a clear idea of the work's contents and purpose, may keep it from reaching the wide audience it deserves.

VOCIFEROUS MOURNERS

I cringe at the hysterics
Of those newly bereaved,
As if mortality were meant for others
And life were not defined by such.
Lost in the fantasy of permanence,
Oblivious to the dominions of decay,
How can they know
The daily grace of miracles

No wonder that they panic,
Helpless in hypocrisy,
At the sudden debris.

—*Saul Rosenthal*

WILLIAM A. SUTTON

Identifying Robert Frost

First-year college students, who had been asked to read a dozen poems by Robert Frost and who had participated in a class session concerning the poet, were asked to identify Robert Frost in a sentence or less. They all knew, of course, that Frost was a poet. Here are other factors mentioned:

Attributes
Great
Famous
American
All-time great
One of greatest American poets
Lived during the twentieth century
Well-known
Extremely famous
Justly-recognized
Very popular
Highly-respected
Lived during the eighteenth century
Lived in first half of twentieth century.

Activities
Wrote many (thousands) of poems
Wrote many books
Died in 1963
Won the attention of many people
Diplomat
Read poem at JFK's inauguration

Poetry
Describes anything from Mother Nature to people
Most people enjoy poems
Is hard or easy
Is difficult to understand
Much is highly-acclaimed

Miscellaneous
A movie was made about him

This response seems to suggest that at least this sample of non-specializing students react to poetry in an external rather than an internal way; that it is what they have heard about a poet which looms largest in the mind rather than what happened when their consciousness encountered the work of the poet.

Probably the most important need in work with students in literature classes is to help them realize that reading is the encounter of one personality with another rather than figuring out which stipulated facts about writing or its author should be mastered in the interest of successful confrontation with a test for a grade.

CORRESPONDENCE

Gentlemen:

Early one spring morning in the early 40's—4:00 a.m., to be more or less accurate—a young man deep in the hills of eastern Kentucky got into his Model T Ford to drive to the nearest railway station to board a train for Cincinnati to exchange there for one to Indianapolis, Indiana, where he had answered a request to address the Indianapolis English Teachers' Club at 4:30 that afternoon.

The young man was Jesse Stuart. He was to talk about the writing of poetry and short stories and to read from his own.

Miss Florence Guild was then head of the English department at Thomas Carr Howe High School, where I had come in 1940 to teach English, especially American literature.

Jesse Stuart, arriving early in the afternoon came at once by bus to the high school, and upon meeting Miss Guild shortly inquired, "Where are those classes in literature? I should like to speak to those students." A tour of classes began and continued until the end of the school day.

It was arranged that I should be relieved early in order to drive Jesse Stuart downtown and to tour the downtown area prior to the time of his address.

Following the club meeting I drove Mr. Stuart to Union Station to await his 6:00 p.m. train homeward. It was my intention to stay with him until his train left. After some conversation, Mr. Stuart, leaning down to open his fat brief case, turned to me: "Mr Craig, you have a family?" "Yes," I replied, "and two children; but they know where I am." "Never mind what they know; I know they want you there with them for dinner. So do I."

As he shuffled his papers, I sensed that he really would not be lonely should I leave. I went. That was Jesse Stuart.

Now after more than three decades and knowing more about Stuart, I am sure that he was sincere in this concern about me and my family as well as in his eagerness to get going on whatever he had in that brief case.

Professor LeMaster's skillful and sympathetic conduct of the interview [Summer 1974 issue of IEJ] makes for pleasant reading for lovers of Jesse Stuart and his writings.

In the early 60's Jesse Stuart agreed to a telephone interview with my classes in American literature at Howe High School in which my students (selected) asked him about what it means to be a writer. Through the school classroom address system, the entire school shared in this interview.

Three years later Mr. Stuart gave us a second interview in the same manner, at which time his wife and his daughter spoke briefly.

So far as we know, these were the first instances in which a literary personage had communicated with large numbers of high school students by use of the telephone.

The *Indiana English Journal* is providing a fine service to the teachers of English in Indiana.

Most sincerely,
Seward S. Craig

SCHEME OF THINGS

I sit in wonder
that a new-dropped foal
with wet red hair
and a white heart
between earth-dark eyes
and wobbling on spider legs
in socks of white
while fixed to the teat
of his first meal
from a palomino mare
munching dew-diamond grass
under a rose-washed dawn
could kill a night in me
a thousand suns
had never pierced

—*Saul Rosenthal*

CALL FOR MANUSCRIPTS

Indiana English Journal is seeking manuscripts of interest to elementary, secondary, and university teachers for the following thematic issues:

Winter 1975-76: Film in the English and Language Arts Classroom. Deadline for receipt of manuscripts: October 15, 1975.

Spring 1976: The Humanities in the English and Language Arts Classroom. Deadline for receipt of manuscripts: January 15, 1976.

Summer 1976: Oral Interpretation and Drama in the English and Language Arts Classroom. Deadline for receipt of manuscripts: April 15, 1976.

Mini-reviews of recent books and teaching materials (no more than 250 words each) concerning the theme for an issue are also invited. Poems are used as filler.

Brief biographical data for our contributors' page should be included with a manuscript.

Manuscripts should be typed and double-spaced. Footnotes should be incorporated within the text whenever possible. Manuscripts and related correspondence should be sent to James S. Mullican, Department of English and Journalism, Indiana State University, Terre Haute, Indiana 47809. A manuscript will not be returned unless accompanied by a self-addressed envelope with return postage clipped to it.

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